

Message Text

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46 55

ACTION PM-04

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P 101512Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6599

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 1206

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, US, IC

SUBJECT: PROPOSED CONVERSION OF RADAR SITES TO CIVILIAN
CONTRACT MANNING

1. COMMANDER ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE HAS BROUGHT TO EMBASSY'S ATTENTION PROPOSAL NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY US AIR FORCE FOR CONVERTING AIRCRAFT CONTROL AND WARNING SQUADRON SITES AT HOFN (H-3) AND ROCKVILLE (H-1) TO CIVILIAN CONTRACT BASIS. PROPOSAL, IN CURRENT FORM, ENTAILS REDUCING AIR FORCE MILITARY MANPOWER AUTHORIZATION BY TOTAL OF 182. ICELANDERS EMPLOYED IN CONNECTION WITH THESE OPERATIONS WOULD PROBABLY BE INCREASED FROM CURRENT 22 TO AS MANY AS 66, ACCORDING TO COMICEDEFOR. THEY WOULD BE JOINED BY APPROXIMATELY 40 UNACCOMPANIED US CONTRACT CIVILIANS.

2. COMICEDEFOR DOES NOT REGARD PROPOSED REDUCTIONN OF MILITARY PERSONNEL UNDER THIS PROPOSAL AS ADDITIONAL TO 420 POSITIONS ALREADY SCHEDULED TO BE ELIMINATED UNDER 1974 MOU. CONSEQUENTLY, PROPOSED REDUCTION WOULD NOT NECESSARILY LOWER PLANNED OCTOBER 1977 END STRENGTH GOAL OF 2897. RATHER, COMICEDEFOR HOPES TO TREAT PROPOSED AIR FORCE REDUCTION AS WINDFALL WHICH WILL ENABLE SCHEDULED ELIMINATION OF 420 POSITIONS UNDER MOU TO BE REDISTRIBUTED AS NEEDED.

3. COMICEDEFOR HAS REQUESTED EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON PROPOSAL AND ASKED THAT WE SEEK CONCURRENCE, IN PRINCIPLE, FROM GOI. EMBASSY DOES NOT RPT NOT PLAN TO RAISE SUBJECT WITH GOI PENDING DEPARTMENT'S AUTHORIZATION TO DO SO, SINCE PROPOSAL
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IS DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO US PLANNING ON MOU. IN MEANTIME,

WE OFFER FOLLOWING COMMENTS FOR DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION.

4. FIRST, REDUCTION IN VISIBILITY OF US MILITARY PERSONNEL WOULD CLEARLY BE CONSISTENT WITH ICELANDIC OBJECTIVES. HOWEVER, PLANNED INTRODUCTION OF 40 OR SO AMERICAN CONTRACT CIVILIANS, MOSTLY IN REMOTE HOFN AREA, COULD BE RISKY. THESE EMPLOYEES MIGHT NOT ALL LIVE ON RADAR SITE AND, IN ANY CASE, WE DOUBT THEY WOULD BE SUBJECT TO STRICT CONTROLS NOW IMPOSED ON US MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THIS ISOLATED LOCALITY. SECOND, COMICEDEFOR PLANS FOR USING ELIMINATION OF 182 SLOTS FROM RADAR SITES TO CUSHION IMPACT ELSEWHERE OF CUTS SCHEDULED UNDER MOU MIGHT BE OVERLY OTTIMISTIC. WE SEE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT ON ONE HAND AS USEFUL DEVICE FOR PRESERVING FULL OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY WHILE AT SAME TIME HONORING US OBLIGATIONS UNDER MOU. ON OTHER HAND, GOI MIGHT SEE REDUCTIONS AT RADAR SITES AS POSSIBLE WINDFALL FOR ITSELF AND SEEK TO ADD AT LEAST SOME OF THESE CUTS TO THOSE ALREADY CALLED FOR UNDER MOU. FINALLY, WE WOULD POINT OUT THAT AIR FORCE AND COMICEDEFOR STILL MUST MAKE FURTHER STUDY OF FEASIBILITY OF PROPOSAL BEFORE THEY FULLY COMMIT THEMSELVES TO IMPLEMENTING IT. WHILE WE BELIEVE THIS COULD BE ADEQUATELY EXPLAINED TO GOI IN REQUESTING LATTER'S CONCURRENCE IN PRINCIPLE, SOME POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT WE MIGHT PREPARE ICELANDERS FOR EVENTUALITY THAT WOULD NOT MATERIALIZE. THIS IS ADDITIONAL REASON WHY WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE PREMATURE FOR EMBASSY TO APPROACH GOI UNLESS AUTHORIZED BY DEPARTMENT.

5. COMICEDEFOR HAS ASKED FOR GOI VIEWS BY SEPTEMBER 20. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS IS IMPRACTICAL AND FOR REASONS INDICATED ABOVE POSSIBLY UNDERSIRABLE. ACCORDINGLY, WE PROPOSE TO INFORM COMICEDEFOR, IF DEPARTMENT CONCURS, THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE CAN APPROACH GOI ON THIS PROBLEM UNTIL WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN FULLY COORDINATED IN WASHINGTON IN CONTEXT OF OTHER PLANNING AND PROJECTS' FEASIBILITY.

7. REQUEST DEPT'S COMMENTS.
BLAKE

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